THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

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JUSTICE ISSUE: SLAVERY, GENOCIDE/INFANTICIDE, DEHUMANIZATION, CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE/ LECTIONARY WEEK:	Exodus 1:8-2:10
SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES:	¶162 Other Social Issues K. Reproductive Health and Abortion; ¶163 Government Responsibilities B. Civil Disobedience; ¶161 Economic Challenges C. Human Trafficking and Slavery; ¶162 Other Social Issues L. Racism, Ethnocentrism, and Tribalism
OBJECTIVE:	Students will examine biblical examples of nonviolent resistance, identify justice issues that matter to them, explore how faith informs activism, and develop practical ways to practice moral courage in their daily lives.
SUPPLIES NEEDED:	Candle or LED candle (for centering), Markers, pens, colored pencils, Index cards or small cardstock sheets, Glue sticks and scissors (for collage work), Magazines or newspapers (print outs from online are okay but recent originals are better)

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

(Light the candle slowly).

Say: We light this candle to illuminate injustices like slavery, genocide, dehumanization, and the inadequacy of health care for pregnant people. May our light shine as a sign of love that brightens the shadows, refusing to be overcome.

Say: Let's enter into a breath prayer together. As you breathe in, pray silently: 'God of Justice...' As you breathe out, pray 'Give me courage.' Let's repeat this slowly together.

(Repeat slowly as needed.)

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SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Say: Today's scripture tells a story of courage and resistance in the face of injustice. We will hear the passage as a dramatic reading. I want you to follow along and as you listen underline places where you notice injustice and circle places where you see resistance.

Read Exodus 1:8-2:10 as a dramatic reading.

Reflection Questions:

- What did you notice?
- Where did you see injustice?
- Where did you see resistance?

Say: In the Social Principles, we find guidance on how to live out justice in our day-to-day lives.

Share highlights of the following Social Principles or break up into small groups/pairs and assign to each group.

- ¶162 Other Social Issues K. Reproductive Health and Abortion "We also affirm ministries and initiatives aimed at promoting reproductive health and enhancing the quality of life for women and girls..."
- ¶163 Government Responsibilities B. Civil Disobedience; "We support those who... feel compelled to disobey or protest unjust or immoral laws..."
- ¶161 Economic Challenges C. Human Trafficking and Slavery; "We condemn human trafficking and slavery as profound violations of the inherent dignity and worth of every person..."
- ¶162 Other Social Issues L. Racism, Ethnocentrism, and Tribalism "We condemn racism, ethnocentrism, tribalism... We call on congregations... to develop strategies for overcoming these kinds of social divisions."

NOTES

Talking Points:

This Exodus account tells us of a shift in leadership to a king who does not know about how the Hebrews through Joseph had at one time saved the Egyptians.

This King is so threatened by a group of people that he enslaves them hoping that by making them work tirelessly, their spirits will be crushed, they will not have energy to rise up, and they will eventually begin to die out.

When that doesn't work, the pharaoh tries to enlist Shiphra and Puah, the midwives who help the Hebrew mothers deliver their babies. He plans to exploit the mothers in their vulnerability by making Shiphrah and Puah complicit in the ethnic cleansing of the Hebrew people.

The midwives seemingly had two choices. The can go along with the system or be killed for defying the pharaoh. But Shiphrah and Puah find a third way.

Leaning into their relationship with God, and knowing they are risking their own lives by defying the king's orders, Shiphrah and Puah save the children by using Pharaoh's own stereotypes and fear against him:

"The Hebrew women aren't like the Egyptian women" they say lifting up the strength of the Hebrew mothers, "They. Are. Vigorous."

We see at work in this reading a number of activists who also took part in resisting the pharaoh . . .

The love of Moses' mother who hid him as long as she could before taking the leap of faith to place him in a basket with prayers that he would be safe.

The strategic acts of Moses' sister, Miriam, who when she is older will be the first woman called a prophet, and as a young girl she followed her baby

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Discussion Questions:

- Who shows courage in this passage?
- Who breaks the rules, and why?
- What does resistance look like for each person?
- What did each person risk by their actions?
- How did the course of history change because of their activism?
- What unjust systems exist today?
- How are people resisting?
- What would it look like for you to "say no" or find a third way?

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Say: Now we are going to respond creatively. You'll create a postcard to Pharaoh a message that speaks truth to power.

Say: In small groups/pairs choose a current issue connected to the Social Principles. Create a postcard from the point of view of a resister in the story or from your perspective today.

On the front include images, drawings, or words that represent the focus of your message. On the back include a reference to a Social Principles ("I believe"), a call to action, a symbol of resistance, and a message of hope.

(Provide time to create)

Say: Who would like to share their postcard and message?

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN.)

Say: Shiphra and Puah were a team and they worked in community with those whom the pharaoh tried to victimize.

NOTES CONT'D

brother down the river and strategically set him up with their own mother to nurse him.

The choice of the pharaoh's daughter who "takes pity" and protects Moses, a sworn enemy of the state, from the devastating law her own father had put in place.

Moses, this Hebrew son, is raised with all of the Egyptian privilege and wisdom that is available at the time.

Unknowingly, he becomes well prepared to take on the tasks that God will put before him.

Each of these people breaks the law of the land to uphold God's laws. They make courageous moral decisions that impact not only their lives and the life of this child, but that lead to the liberation of the Hebrew people from captivity.

Their courage leads to Moses' prophetic leadership whose teachings from God continue to guide us just as they guided Jesus.

NOTES

Supplies: Index cards, markers, collage materials

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It is through our community of faith, that we can also transform despair into love and life. May these liberation stories of resistance and resilience that belonged to our ancestors give us hope and courage.

Be empowered with the confidence that when you are faced with situations that are not normal,
that are not moral . . .
that are not part of God's plan,
the same God who led Miriam,
and Shiphra and Puah
and Moses' adoptive and birth mothers
that same God will draw out of you
the courage to be vigorous
and to always deliver truth to power
in the name of Jesus.